

June 25, 2023

Matthew 10:24-39

²⁴“A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; ²⁵it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

²⁶“So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ²⁷What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. ²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear [the one] who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your [Parent]. ³⁰And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

³²“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my [Parent] in heaven; ³³but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my [Parent] in heaven.

³⁴“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household. ³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

How would you define “discipleship”?

dis-ci-ple, n. a follower or pupil of a teacher, leader, or philosopher: *a disciple of Rousseau*.

dis-ci-ple-ship, n. the state of attempting to follow the example of Jesus or another teacher: *Jesus taught that discipleship was a journey*.

- *The New Oxford American Dictionary*, ©2001

I have thought discipleship was to be attempting to attain the high expectations of “living the love and justice of Jesus”.

Fighting discrimination, working to change unjust laws, making public statements, challenging the status quo, and so much more.

Such discipleship is an impossible, never-ending task.

As I reflected on how best to share with you how we might both better understand and embody discipleship, Cay Wilcox came to my mind.

Here is a little of Cay’s story:

- raised in a church-attending family
- missionary to Japan, post WWII
- married a Japanese man, they came back to the States and she helped him get his PhD in theology.
- He got a position as seminary professor and divorced Cay
- She worked in a variety of faith settings
- met, later in life, Rev. Conrad Browne, a true soulmate
- Through good times and bad she never complained
- Still today, at 99 and the health struggles that age often entails, she never complains

I have not met a single person, who has met Cay, who is not deeply impressed and moved by her

She radiates love

But it is not easy. Showing love to those others hate often is divisive. That is what is behind Jesus' divisive sword. He is saying you are to love, despite the consequences.

For example, Cay did not let the bitterness of divorce stop her sharing love with the world. It would have been easy for her to dwell on and express how awful some people can be; an attitude that can, over time, eat one up.

She also had health issues, so life can be hard at times, but Cay never complains

She radiates love and doesn't think twice about sharing her belief that God's presence and love and the example of Jesus' grace are what keep her focused on giving thanks, no matter her circumstances.

This is discipleship. "Discipleship begins and ends with love." Such love nurtures those we meet and share God's love with.

Cay is an inspiration. And I know enough about what it takes to be "an inspiration" that I have no desire to attain that status. Those whom I have met and are an inspiration have been to hell and back.

That does not mean that I will not try my best to be a disciple of Jesus by living out God's unconditional love revealed to me in Jesus the Christ.

I pray each one of you will try each and every day to live out this kind of discipleship. Amen.